

## INVERTEBRATE CONSERVATION IN THE UK – THE ROLE OF INVERTEBRATE LINK (JCCBI) AND THE BRITISH ENTOMOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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This paper reviews the involvement of the British Entomological & Natural History Society (BENHS) with Invertebrate Link (JCCBI), and their current contribution to invertebrate conservation in the UK.

### REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF INVERTEBRATE LINK (JCCBI)

First formed in 1967 as the Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Insects, the name was later changed to reflect coverage of non-insect groups, becoming the Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Invertebrates. More recently, the name has been changed again to Invertebrate Link (JCCBI) the shortened form InvLink is used here. The new name reflects the Committee’s key role as a ‘link’ body, analogous to Wildlife & Countryside Link (a broad forum of UK voluntary environmental organisations, see <http://www.wcl.org.uk/home.shtml>) or Plantlife Link (a forum of UK botanical societies and conservation organisations, convened by Plantlife). Membership of InvLink, and the right to send no more than two representatives to meetings, is open to any UK or country-level body with an interest in the conservation of British invertebrates (see Annex 1 for the current InvLink membership), although the Committee largely confines its attention to terrestrial and freshwater faunas. The full Committee meets twice yearly, but its work is advanced in interim periods by a sub-committee, the Executive (see Annex 2 for current membership). Working Groups may also be formed to pursue particular issues (like that recently established to help co-ordinate invertebrate input to the forthcoming review of UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species—see the InvLink notice published elsewhere in this volume). Over the years, the Committee has produced a number of well-regarded documents, in the form of codes of practice and policy statements, examples of which are summarised in Table 1. It has also organised a series of conferences, the latest of which is planned for 3 April 2004 (details available through Buglife, see website address below). InvLink provides a unique forum for the exchange of information and views amongst a wide range of bodies involved in invertebrate conservation in the UK. This role has been enhanced recently by the abolition of observer status for the country conservation agencies and other statutory bodies, which now enjoy full membership status on the Committee. In order to effectively discharge its roles and responsibilities, InvLink relies on committed individuals who can speak on behalf of those organisations represented on the Committee.

Perhaps the most significant InvLink initiative in recent years has been its pivotal role in the establishment of Buglife—the Invertebrate Conservation Trust (BICT), which now exists as an independent entity (see <http://www.buglife.org.uk>). Hence, there are now two bodies with a specific remit to further the conservation of all invertebrates in the UK. Whilst a range of societies, agencies and other institutions (many of them members of InvLink) are contributing to this goal, these two bodies are the only ones dedicated specifically to this task. Unlike InvLink, BICT has the

Table 1. Examples of tangible outputs from Invertebrate Link (JCCBI)

**Lists of rare and endangered British insects**

Amongst the first attempts to formally recognise those species in need of particular conservation attention.

JCCBI 1973a. British Macrolepidoptera: rare and endangered species and forms. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **108** [1972]: 179–180.

JCCBI 1973b. British Odonata and Orthoptera: rare and endangered species. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **109**: 50.

JCCBI 1973c. Rare and endangered species—general list. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **109**: 250–251.

**Code for insect collecting**

A widely cited guide to good practice in insect collecting. First published in 1969; revised and re-issued in 1987; recently revised and re-issued as:

Invertebrate Link (JCCBI) (2002). A Code of Conduct for Collecting Insects and Other Invertebrates. *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History* **15**: 1–6.

**Code for insect re-introductions**

A widely cited guide to good practice in the re-establishment of insect populations.

JCCBI 1986. Insect re-establishment—a code of conservation practice. *Antenna* **10**: 13–18

**Guidelines for invertebrate site surveys**

Brooks, S.J. 1993. Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Invertebrates: Guidelines for invertebrate site surveys. *British Wildlife* **4**: 283–286. Also available as AES Leaflet 38—*Site survey guidelines*.

**Conference proceedings**

Brooks, S.J., ed. (1997). *Unity of purpose for invertebrate conservation: maintaining the biodiversity of British invertebrates*. Proc. 1st JCCBI Conference, Peterborough, 24 February, 1996, 48pp.

Brooks, S.J. & Stubbs, A.E., eds. 1998. *How to give invertebrates a higher profile in conservation*. Proc. 2nd JCCBI Conference, Peterborough, 27 September 1997, 74 pp.

**Others (unpublished JCCBI)**

Lott, D. & Stubbs, A.E. 1999. *Guidelines to local BAP groups on the selection of priority habitats for invertebrates*. (Unpublished, JCCBI.)

Willing, M.J. 2000. *JCCBI Green Paper: Towards establishing a national invertebrate conservation co-ordinating body—The Invertebrate Conservation Trust*. (Unpublished, JCCBI.)

facilities to manage specific, funded projects. Hence, BICT is better placed than InvLink to implement specific initiatives involving conservation action 'on the ground'. BICT also has a full-time staff, and is therefore relatively well-placed to provide a rapid response to particular incidents or circumstances when there is no opportunity for the wider invertebrate interest and conservation community to do so through InvLink. Furthermore, whilst BICT will hopefully develop a strong public identity, there is not such an immediate need for InvLink to do so. This will put BICT in a better position than InvLink to take the lead on public advocacy ('campaigning') for invertebrate conservation, leaving the Committee to concentrate on issues relating to strategy, policy, and the promotion of appropriate principles and best practice.

InvLink provides a unique mechanism for the direct exchange of information between members of the UK invertebrate interest and conservation community and for the development of collective views. This includes policy-level advocacy ('lobbying'), at least in those instances when a considered, unified view from across the invertebrate interest and conservation community would carry more weight than individual submissions. However, there may also be occasions (e.g. when insufficient time is available to agree a common position) when individual submissions from organisations represented on InvLink would be more appropriate as part of a lobbying process. There may also be occasions when not all of the organisations represented on the Committee feel able to 'sign up to' a particular set of views expressed by InvLink. This can be accommodated by the omission of the names of such organisations from any presentation of those views. However, the Committee strives as far as possible to develop views based on a broad consensus.

In summary, InvLink exists to advance the conservation of invertebrates in the UK by facilitating exchange of information between relevant organisations and statutory bodies, and by providing a context for co-operative ventures in relation to the development of strategy, policy, principles and best practice. Its main roles and responsibilities are those directly relating to:

- Provision of a forum for the free flow of information between organisations and statutory bodies involved in invertebrate conservation in the UK, with an emphasis on terrestrial and freshwater faunas, and on *in situ* conservation measures.
- Stimulation of debate, discussion and ideas towards the enhanced conservation of invertebrates in the UK, particularly through collaborative working amongst those bodies represented on the Committee.
- Production of specific guidance to the wider invertebrate interest and conservation community (specialists, academics, conservation practitioners, etc.) and policy makers, through the development and dissemination of codes of best practice, statements of principles, etc.

#### REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE BENHS

The membership of the BENHS includes a significant proportion of the leading field entomologists in the UK. As befits its position in the entomological world, the Society is committed to broad conservation aims. However, in the current climate, it could be argued that it should become more involved in practical conservation initiatives. The major obstruction to this has always been the lack of any full-time paid employees, the functioning of the Society being totally dependent upon volunteer labour and the dedicated efforts of its Officers and Council.

The Society has, from inception, supported and been represented on the Joint Committee for the Conservation of British Insects, now Invertebrate Link (JCCBI). Many of the Society's members contribute to conservation in various different ways, in addition to being members of the Society, for example by supporting other allied organisations such as the RSPB, Amateur Entomological Society, Royal Entomological Society, Butterfly Conservation, Dipterists Forum, Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society and Wildlife Trusts. The amassing of species records and their submission to National Recording Schemes is a major element in monitoring our indigenous fauna, and a number of BENHS members contribute in this way. Published species records, like those appearing in articles and exhibition reports in the Society's journal, are also valuable for assessing and monitoring species

distribution patterns. A review of UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species is due to be completed in 2005 (see the InvLink notice published elsewhere in this volume), and it is hoped that significantly more BENHS members will be able to undertake survey work on species selected from the new lists, as and when they are published. The Society's strength has always lain in the in-depth expertise of its membership, which is second to none and covers all Orders of invertebrates, coupled with its world-renowned publications and journal. These, together with organised field and indoor meetings and retention of reference collections, make an invaluable contribution to entomology in general and conservation in particular.

In 1994, the Society's Conservation Working Group (CWG) was founded, primarily based upon the enthusiasm of Stephen Miles (President 1999), with the aim of undertaking specific activities that could bring to bear the expertise of members on matters relating to the conservation of the UK's invertebrate fauna. It is fair to say that the response to this initiative from the general membership was somewhat disappointing, and is probably reflected by the position that the Society currently holds in relation to practical conservation measures. However, the members who expressed an interest in this branch of the Society's activities have, with the limited available resources, attempted to enhance the profile of the Society in various ways (e.g. see Phillips & Dobson, 1998).

From 1994–1999 Invertebrate Identification Days were held for the Hampshire and Herefordshire Wildlife Trusts and for the RSPB in Suffolk, and it is hoped that similar initiatives will continue over the coming years. During the last four years, the Society has been involved in Butterfly Conservation's Action for Threatened Moths Project (Parsons *et al.*, 2000; Phillips, 2000), and has assisted them in the assessment of the status of some Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species, namely: the Banded Tooth-Striped *Trichopteryx polycommata* (D. & S.), the Square-spotted Clay *Xestia rhomboidea* (Esper), (e.g. Young, 2001); and the Brighton Wainscot *Oria musculosa* (Hübner).

Another major undertaking has been becoming Lead Partner for the Heathland Flies Project; this involves a five-year programme of survey work to assess the ecology and relationships between the Mottled Bee-fly *Thyridanthrax fenestratus* (Fallén); the Heath Bee-fly *Bombylius minor* L., and the hoverfly *Chrysotoxum octomaculatum* Curtis, together with the sphecid wasp host *Ammohpila pubescens* Curtis. This work is co-ordinated by Stephen Miles. A working plan of research into the life history of these species has been going on between 1990–2003, involving up to 25 BENHS members (and some non-members), from the home counties to as far north as the Isle of Man. It is hoped that, by disseminating the results and their heathland management implications, the Society will influence those tasked with the management of vulnerable heathland areas to take into account the conservation of these and similar dependent species.

In conclusion, it should not be forgotten that the Society (in line with its charitable status) manages two funds; namely The Maitland Emmet BENHS Research Fund and The Professor Hering Memorial Research Fund, which enable grants to be made to research projects of a conservation nature on an annual basis.

#### REFERENCES

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- Phillips, J.W. 2000. Butterfly Conservation—Action for Threatened Moths Project—An Opportunity for Participation by BENHS Members. *The British Journal of Entomology and Natural History* **13**: 63–66.
- Young, D. 2001. *Xestia rhomboidea* (Esper) (Square Spotted Clay) (Lepidoptera): request for Information. *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History* **14**: 92.

### **Annex 1: Organisations currently represented on Invertebrate Link (JCCBI)**

Action for Invertebrates  
 Amateur Entomologists' Society  
 Ancient Tree Forum  
 Balfour-Browne Club  
 Biological Records Centre  
 British Arachnological Society  
 British Dragonfly Society  
 British Entomological & Natural History Society  
 British Myriapod & Isopod Group  
 Buglife—The Invertebrate Conservation Trust  
 Butterfly Conservation  
 CABI Bioscience  
 Conchological Society of Great Britain & Ireland  
 Countryside Council for Wales  
 Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)  
 Dipterists' Forum  
 English Nature  
 Environment Agency  
 Forestry Commission (Forest Research)  
 Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
 National Trust for England, Wales & Northern Ireland  
 Natural History Museum  
 Royal Entomological Society  
 Royal Museum of Scotland  
 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)  
 Scottish Natural Heritage  
 The Wildlife Trusts

### **Annex 2: Current membership of the Invertebrate Link (JCCBI) Executive**

Mike Morris [President, Invertebrate Link (JCCBI)]  
 Oliver Cheesman [Chairman, Invertebrate Link (JCCBI)]  
 Nigel Bourn [Convenor, Invertebrate Link (JCCBI)]  
 David Lonsdale  
 Alan Stubbs  
 John Phillips